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WHIRRAKEE

January/February 2006 Vol. 27 No. 1

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
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Office Bearers for 2005 - 2006

President	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Senior Vice President	Stuart Fraser	12 Bambara Close, Bendigo	
Junior Vice President	Anne Bridley		5449 3479.
Secretary	Anne Bridley		5449 3479.
Minute Secretary	Jan Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
	(with Peter Ellis as assistant)		
Treasurer	Stuart Fraser		
Membership Officer	Kate Lottkowitz	80 Piccaninny Rd, RSD Strathfieldsaye	5439 3157
Excursion organiser	done by the committee		
Syllabus organiser	Rod Orr	2 Cockerel Court, Bendigo	5443 5668
	(an assistant's position for the syllabus organiser is still vacant)		
Librarian	Diana Collier	31 Milroy Street, Bendigo	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	46 Railway Place, Goornong	5432 2380
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Darren White)		0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens	82 Somerville Street, Bendigo	5443 2797
		e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The invited speaker at general meetings starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper.
If a workshop is held prior to the meeting, it will be advertised and it usually starts at 7.00pm.
The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 7:30pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Ben Goonan, Richard Goonan, Bill Holsworth, Rob Moors, Rod Orr, Bob Ruddick, Darren White.

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. In addition to local excursions, campouts are held several times each year, usually coinciding with long weekends or holiday periods.

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one active group that meets regularly (the Fauna Study Group) and other groups that meet at irregular intervals.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observers Group: This group has field excursions and the occasional lecture evening. Please consult the *Whirrakee* for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose meetings or excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see bottom of page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 27, No. 1, January/February 2006
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's note
Welcome to a new year of Whirrakee. Sometimes after I had a holiday, I come back and really need another one. If that applies to you – I know how you feel. However, if you want to see a bit more of the country before you settle back into your routine, why not join Richard Goonan on our first official excursion for 2006. See page 3 for details of the whole program for 2006.
I am grateful to Chris Bunn, a member from Canberra. Chris had submitted the two articles a long time ago (in fact for the 60th anniversary) but, unusually, space was at a premium for the last few editions.
On page 10 there is a weed alert about Early Black Wattle (Acacia decurrens). I did not have room to put the illustrations in that went with the letter, hopefully people who are unsure about these wattles have access to a book like 'Costermans' or similar. If not, I have a copy of the illustration and will send it to those that request it. See you all at the first meeting on February. Please bring your holiday slides along. Any holiday stories for printing are, of course, always welcome.

Front Cover Photograph – Photographer: Karen Thomas
Three beautiful baby Willi Wagtails. These were the second brood for the season, reared outside Karen Thomas' bedroom window. Read about the efforts of the parents when re-building the nest on page 4.

BFNC EXCURSIONS CALENDAR 2006

Richard Goonan – 0423418815

DATE	FEBURARY 11	MARCH 11	APRIL 15	MAY 13	JUNE 17	JULY 15	AUGUST 12	SEPT 16	OCTOBER 14	NOVMBER 11	DECEMBER 16
LOCATION	***MT BUFFALO***	***LERDEDERG GORGE***	***Sewerage Farm / Whipstick Forest***	***WELSFORD FOREST Mandurang Forest***	***LOCAL LANDSCAPES Geology/ Ecology***	***KOOYOORA / INGLEWOOD***	***DAYLESFORD***	***NORTH CRNTRAL ROADSIDES***	***BAMAH FOREST***	***CAMPASPE RIVER***	***MT ALEXANDER REGIONAL PARK***
COMMENT	Alpine / Sub-alpine vegetation (fire recovery), Birds, short walks (on tracks) (1x2hr, 3x1hr), historic chalet, waterfall. Please feel free if you would enjoy a more relaxed day to come and take your time at the chalet or Lake Catanii, while others are off walking.	Central Victorian Highlands, walking, birds, plants. Slightly more extended walk, with option for those who may wish to take it easier.	Local birds, water birds, dry forest birds (visit some dams), farmland birds. short walks on and off track.	Local fauna and habitat. The Welsford forest is an extensive area of Box / Ironbark forest that has many significant values. Mandurang forest is also vital habitat for local fauna and several nest box and survey sites are located there. Forest walks, plants, birds.	Taking in some of Bendigo's many high viewpoints, travel the region looking at some of the different geological formations and broad ecological associations.	Short walks, Box/Ironbark forest, Granite hills, Birds, Plants, Indigenous cultural sites.	Fungi, short walks, birds, plants, orchids, mining relics,	Travel around the district looking at some of the issues associated with roadside cons, plants, birds, and habitat.	Indigenous culture, Birds, Plants, Murry River, Wetlands?	Travel the river looking at changes in the landscape. Stopping at several points for short walks and freshwater invertebrate survey looking at river health.	Plants, birds, weeds, Ecology – butterflies and spiders, short walks on and off track, koala area, Granite area, higher rainfall and elevation.
COST	$15:00	$ 15:00	$10:00	$10:00	$10:00	$15:00	$15:00	$ 10:00	$ 15:00	$ 10:00	$ 10:00
TIME Leave: Return:	**7:00 am 8:00 pm**	**8:00 am 4:00 pm**	**8:00 am 3:00 pm**	**8:00 am 3:00 pm**	**9:00 am 3:00 pm**	**9:00 am 4:00 pm**	**9:00 am 4:00 pm**	**9:00 am 4:00 pm**	**7:00 am 5:00 pm**	**8:00 am 4:00 pm**	**8:00 am 3:00 pm**
BRING Hat, Sunglasses, Long Sleeve Shirt, Sturdy Footware (Boots) Long Pants or Gaiters, Personal medical requirments, Water.	Raincoat or Jacket, Jumper, **Lunch, Dinner** (Esky)	Day pack, lunch / Snacks, Walking boots L / pants	Lunch, Chair,	Lunch	Lunch	Jacket, Jumper, Lunch.	Jacket, Jumper, Lunch	Jacket, Jumper, Lunch,	L / pants Swimmers Sunscreen Towel Lunch	Lunch Swimmers Towel Sunscreen	Long pants (Gaiters), Lunch, Water.

"You get knocked down ...you get up again ...you never going to keep us down.....lessons from our avian friends...."

By Karen Thomas

You have to admire the determination of a pair of Willy Wag Tails and their "never give up" attitude, who set up camp outside our bedroom window this year.

Having just built a nest, laid, fed and reared 3 offspring to near fledgling stage and then to have them whipped off as a tasty breakfast would be enough to make any Homo Sapiens pack up and go on a vacation....but these wonderful little creatures picked themselves up and started all over again....nest and all....on the other side, would you believe, of the same tree.

This tree is a popular site also supporting a pair of nesting White Plumed Honeyeaters ...but that's another story. Not to mention parenting mudlarks in the neighbouring River Red..... "God help any raven that came into this precinct!"

The next day the Willies proceeded to start again. It was hilarious to see them return to their selected branch with heads covered in a mass of spider webs; but also fascinating to watch them weave this web around the branch. Many an acrobatic stance was taken in an attempt to hang on to the top of the branch...tails up...head down...and scrape their beaks on the underside of the selected site.

I decided to give them a helping hand and collected spider web from the windows ...which they took...a win, win for all ...willies and my clean windows. However attempts to leave the dog's fur out for them didn't go down too well... for both Willies and my dogs.

At some stage when a sliver of a platform on the branch was deemed sufficient they began to introduce grasses and fine twigs. These were not so much woven into the spider web but prodded and poked. I had to breathe a sigh of relief (for the spiders that is)...when they then proceeded to deconstruct their old nest and bring it, bit by bit to the new site....yep...recycling ...another lesson I hear you say.

A few days later the nest began to take shape... the old one completely obliterated ...again deep joy was felt as I watched them shape the nest to the correct size...it reminded me very much of trying to stretch a woollen jumper shrunk in the wash. One at a time into the nest, head first they would go...and with their chests pushing on one side of the nest, their legs would kick the other as they circumnavigated the perimeter...beautifully executed resulting in a lovely shaped nest.

Sadly I missed their courtship and egg laying...but I could gather from the increasing elevation of mum and dad in the nest that they had hatched ...voila 3 baby willies again!!! I was a little concerned though with the new site they had selected as it had a very low overhanging branch ....good for predator avoidance, but it was suspenseful watching the babies grow and push mum and dad up, forcing their heads to squash under this branch.

Well, I am happy to say the 3 babies have fledged...the tree was used for 2 days as a testing ground for aerial training. Even with tiny stubs for a tail they wagged them...just like mum and dad. Now with babies gone off to further a field I ponder whether mum and dad will be back for round 3. At least I have my life back for a little while, that is .....there's a pair of Blue Wrens and Swallows starting at my front door.

U3A Castlemaine Excursion to Gariwerd November 2005

by Diana Collier

The Western Region U3A Cluster "camp" at Halls Gap in Gariwerd (Grampians) was reported on last month, but three activities were mentioned but not described. [after all, one couldn't attend everything that the Stawell Group organised so well]. These activities were, bird watching, the wildflower walk in the indigenous botanic gardens and a visit to the Bambruk Cultural Centre.

The Bird Watching Walk was between Norval Conference Centre (where we stayed) and the Bambruk Aboriginal Cultural Centre and was in the mornings of Tuesday and Wednesday, and - after the earlier pouring rain, very sunny and pleasant. We were lucky enough to have two very well-informed Birdos, one of whom is a Tasmanian, and when she heard my name, realised she'd known my sister, when they were teenagers in Hobart. This was quite a surprise.

We saw and heard 23 birds (heard, but did not see three of these)
Corella
New Holland Honeyeater
Magpie
Yellow-faced Honeyeater
Crimson Rosella
Eastern Spinebill
Kookaburra,
Wood Ducks
Gang Gang
Grey Fantails
Rainbow Lorikeet
Brown Thornbill
Rufous Whistler
Yellow Robin
Welcome Swallow
Blue Wren
Little Raven
Spotted Pardalote
Striated Pardalote
Red Wattlebird
(Heard): Mistletoe Bird,
Grey Shrike-thrush,
Stubble Quail [thrush]

The Wildflower Walk was also a lot of fun. Our guide was interesting, but not as well-informed as members of our local Field Naturalists Clubs! It was enlightening and very encouraging, to find that the Botanic Gardens are an indigenous plants gardens - surely this is unique? There are lovely botanic gardens in some of the northern states, but those I've seen are not devoted to, and only, indigenous plants.
In Halls Gap Gardens, some of the species were planted together in patches Those I saw were:
Correa
Prickly Geebung
Calytrix tetragona
Variable prickly grevillea
Calytrix alpectus [Snow myrtle]
Dagger Hakea
Billardia bidyonasi
Beaked Hakea (*H. rostrata*)
Apple-berry [like a correa]
Ditto [like a waxflower]
Eucalyptus verrucata
Exocarpus [wild cherry]
Mint bush
Grevillea diamorpha
Melaleuca decussata [totem poles]
Casuarina, Grampians [she-oke]
Westringia plabrum
Tall purple flags (Iridaceae)
Dodonia [hop-bush]
Hibbertia sericea
Waxflower (Fairy)
Musk Daisy bush (*Olearia*)
Rock Correa
Clematis
Goodenia ovata
Honeypots
Ferns
Grampians Thryptomene
Grevillea, [various examples]

At various times, some of us went to the Brambuk Aboriginal Cultural Centre, which was set out developmentally. There was a very interesting introductory film, a long historical time-line, photographs and artefacts with descriptive annotations, helpful people, and also a Bush Tucker Café. The menu included, pumpkin and lemon myrtle soup; wattleseed damper with wild rosella jam and cream, quandong jam drop biscuits and much more... with Wattleseed tea or Wattleseed coffee. There was lots to buy too, to take away:

Wattleseed
Wild Rosella Jam
Lemon Myrtle,
Bush Tomato Chutney
Native mint
Wild Lime & Brandy Sauce
Mountain pepper.,
Muntries Chutney
Lemon aspen (*Acronychoa acidula*)
Quandong & Chili Sauce
Illawarra plums (*Podocrpus elatus*)
Mango & Native Mint Salsa
Riberry (*Syzgium Luehma*)
Wattleseed & Butterscotch Sauce
and more...

Some items were in packets, some in jars appropriately. I bought some wattleseed tea, as I prefer it to the coffee, very expensive, but very enjoyable.

The last impressive sight for me was the Elephant Hide Hill slopes, on the way to Boroka Falls, which are about 15 kms. from Halls Gap. Exactly like an elephant hide and immense.

The amazing story of Eclectus Parrots

By Chris Bunn, ACT

Eclectus parrots, found in the rainforests of Cape York Peninsula in far north Queensland and in New Guinea, are one of the world's largest most spectacular parrots. The males are a vibrant green and the females are a stunning vermilion. They look so different that for a long time the different sexes were mistakenly thought to be separate species. In the bird world, the males usually have brilliant plumage to attract mates or fend off rivals, and the females have drabber colours to help them hide when nesting.

Robert Heinsohn, who works at the ANU Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, wrote up a proposal and sent it off to the Australian Research Council, explaining why he wanted to go and study Eclectus parrots up on Cape York Peninsula. They are big parrots — about the size of a sulphur-crested cockatoo — and they nest in tree hollows about 30m off the ground, locatedon the remote point of Cape York. His application was successful and led to an eigth study.

What he discovered during his study was that eclectus parrots are radically different from other parrot species. Most parrot species are monogamous, with pairs sharing feeding and rearing of chicks. The female eclectus can mate with up to five males, and all signs point to multiple fathers of the chicks.

He also discovered that unless threatened - by a climbing scientist or a predatory scrub python - the females rarely leave their nesting hollows. Good nesting hollows are scarce, so females virtually never leave the nest. They use their red colouring to warn that a hollow is occupied and fight to the death with other females (and other species) to defend their hollow

The females sit in the hollows for a month before laying eggs (usually September) and do all the incubation and brooding of the chicks, depending on the males to bring food. Even after the chicks have fledged, the females still guard and occupy the hollows. Good hollows are hard to find, many are subject to flooding and those closer to the ground are exposed to predation of the eggs and chicks by pythons.

The green males spend most of their time foraging for rainforest fruits in the tree canopy and their green colouring makes them less conspicuous.
Robert, using a spectrometer to bounce light off feathers, was able to build up a computer image of how the parrots appear to each other and to their predators. They were able to get precise measurements of the colour spectrum of patches of feathers. The first discovery was that the head and cheeks were the brightest patches of red on the female parrots — which fitted in with the theory of the red colouring being used as a warning that the nest hollows were occupied. The males were a surprise. Their green had a lot of ultra-violet and this may be connected to how the females select a mate. Do they choose the brightest, showiest male?

In a study done a few years earlier, Rob and others investigated the extraordinary patterns of sex allocation in eclectus parrots. These birds are extremely unusual as they are one of the few birds with nestlings that are easily sexed. They lay two eggs per clutch, but often only fledge one young. In their study the sex ratio of 209 fledglings did not differ significantly from parity. However, when two young are fledged together they are very likely to be of the same sex, and some females produce long unbroken runs of one sex (the maximum was 20 males) before switching to the other sex. Statistical simulations show that these runs of same-sex clutches defy expectation and also show that the sex bias must occur mostly at fertilization. This control over sex allocation in eclectus parrots is one of the most extreme reported from any bird species.
Most information on wild eclectus parrots is anecdotal, although it is clear that they live in cooperative groups comprised mostly of males that defend the area around their nest holes in rainforest trees. Observations indicate that the whole adult population appears strongly male-biased If males are predominantly the helping sex, it may be adaptive for breeding females to produce males when they need help in reproduction and territory defence, and females when group size is large enough and any further helpers detrimental.

Information from *The Canberra Times* and *"Extreme bias in sex allocation in Eclectus parrots" by* Robert Heinsohn, Sarah Legge and Simon Barry in Proceedings of the Royal Society (1997). All are based at ANU.

How an Australian native helped win the war.

By Chris Bunn - ACT

It is a fact that the successful military operations on D-Day could have depended on a drug extracted from an Australian native plant. The drug is hyoscine and in small amounts it alleviates motion sickness. Today in excess of 3% scolamine-hyoscine is extracted from a similar plant. This is the highest natural level in the world. Hyoscine is the active ingredient in travel sickness pills such as Kwells®.

This native plant is *Duboisia myoporoides,* a small tree often known as corkwood. It grows from the coast and tablelands districts of northern New South Wales to Cape York Peninsula in Queensland. It requires of high rainfall and sandy or loamy soils, often found on the edges of rainforests or on stabilized sand dunes. A closely related plant *Duboisia leichardtii* is found in the drier hinterland.

In the pioneering days in eastern Australia, poisoning of livestock by these plants was fairly frequent, mainly from regrowth on newly cleared land. People handling the leaves often complained of dryness of the throat, headache, impairment of vision and loss of taste.

In 1940, there was very little hyoscine in Australia and it could only be purchased from the United States at £25 an ounce (28 grams). At that time Australia needed eleven ounces. Russell Grimwade, the industrialist, took up the challenge, collecting 108 lbs (49 kilograms) of Duboisia leaves from which his company extracted seven ounces of high quality hyoscine. By the end of 1941, 1770 lb of dry leaf had yielded 91 oz of hyoscine. From 1942 onwards the production of alkaloids rose steeply, with the bulk of production being exported from Australia to all the allied countries of the world (including the United States). The products of the Duboisia leaves were utilised completely, with the extraction of alkaloids other than hyoscine; the chlorophyll was purified and marketed; and the residual leaves were given to market gardeners in Melbourne for compost.

A third plant in the group (*D. hopwoodii)* is not used commercially but recognised as a plant with its own special properties and is found in the more arid areas of the northern half of Australia, from Queensland to the Kimberly area of WA. The chief constituent of *D. hopwoodii* was found to be nicotine and nor-nicotine, constituting up to 25% of the dried weight of the plant material. The name 'pituri' (although there are many spelling variations) was the name used by the aborigines for the extracted drug.

Pituri was considered above all other power plants the most important in traditional aboriginal society and culture. The drug is used in the form of the leaves, which are generally dried, powdered and then mixed with ash made from species such as Acacia, Cassia or Eucalyptus. Rolled up into balls or 'quids" it is then chewed. The mixing of the alkaline ash with the plant material would have rendered the alkaloids more available when chewed or ingested. When not being chewed the 'quids' were quite commonly kept behind the ear much as people did with chewing gum for later chewing. It may also have been shared, given to others to chew similar to sharing a pipe. The aborigines have also occasionally smoked Pituri, but it is thought likely that this habit was copied from tobacco-smoking Europeans.

Key references used

Everist S *Poisonous Plants of Australia (1974)*
Grimwade R *Duboisia – Australia's own drug plant* Walkabout June 1, 1954, 29-32
Lassak E and McCarthy T *Australian Medicinal Plants (1983)*
Poynter J, *Russell Grimwade (1967)*

Duboisia myoporoides
Artist: Kathleen O'Ryan © Australian National Botanic Gardens

General Meeting - December
'Size, Structure and Site Fidelity of Flame Robins (*Petroica phoenicea*)'
Authors – Glenise Moors, Jan Orr and Anne Bridley

by Sabine Wilkens

This multi-authored work was presented by Glenise at the December general meeting of the club. The paper was also presented at the recent National Bird Conference in October, so I felt privileged to hear it in the nice comfortable surroundings of the club, after a scrumptious Christmas dinner provided by club members.

The site for this seven year long study was the Big Hill Range at Sedgwick. It contains granite and metamorphic rock and has scattered mature eucalypts and some acacias.
Robins prefer closely grazed pasture to find their food (insects, worms and other invertebrates) but mature eucalypts are also very important to them. The Australian Hobby and the Collard Sparrowhawk are their main predators, while magpies frequently chase and harass them. Other bird species seem to associate with robins in more peaceful ways, the Southern Whiteface, for example, frequently feeds alongside robins.

Flame Robins are migratory. They move between their over-wintering sites and breeding sites. Sedgwick is one such over-wintering site. It is thus in winter that Glenise and her helpers do most of their observations...rain, hail, wind, amazingly they go out several times a week, no matter what the conditions.

Glenise started banding robins in 1986, but the present project started in 1999 and this is when Jan and later Anne also became involved. Robins are caught in traps baited with live worms, and then a unique combination of colour bands is attached to their right and left leg.

The aim of the project was to determine the size of the group of robins and the dynamics of this Sedgwick population.

Flame Robins come in two colours, brown and red. Brown birds normally make up about three quarter of a population and constitute females and young male birds. Red is reserved for mature males. The ratio varies considerably over the years. In 2005 it was 5:1, perhaps because there were a lot of young birds?

Glenise, Jan and Anne divided up the population at Sedgwick into several sub-groups. Each day the birds move within a small area. The A-group stays on the metamorphic rocks, while the B-group lives in the granite area nearby. Birds sometimes move around between groups in response to disturbances or other factors.

During the seven years of this study, a total of 541 birds were banded. At the beginning the average number of hours spend in the field to trap a single bird was about 23 (!), but the 'hunters' have become much more skilled, thinking like robins when deciding when and where to set the traps and, as a result, the trap hours have been reduced in 2005 to an amazing 5 hours per bird.
The population at a site are made up of birds banded in earlier years, birds banded in the current year and unbanded birds. A count of the population every 20 minutes or so shows a continuously changing mix.

Flame Robins migrate to higher country for breeding. Although the exact location for breeding of this population is not known, their numbers seem to have been affected negatively by the 2003 bushfires in the Victorian mountains.

They do exhibit fidelity to the Sedgwick site. Some birds come back to the same place every year. In 2005, two birds showed up that were banded in 1999.

There is usually a core group that resides at the site for most of winter, while most individuals visit the site only briefly, but regularly, on route to somewhere else.

But where do they go after they leave Sedgwick? No consistent trends have been observed to answer this question. Glenise and her team of inspired bird watchers have looked for banded Flame Robins all over Victoria.

Any reports of the birds would be most welcome. This was such an inspiring talk, most listeners would have wanted to go out straight away with a spotting telescope and help Glenise, Jan and Anne find their much-loved birds.

Dear Landcarer: Weed Alert – Early Black Wattle (*Acacia decurrens*)

By Dean Bridgfoot and Chris Pollock, Land Care Coordinators, Mount Alxander and Macedon Ranges Shire Councils and Frances Cincotta, 'Newstead Natives'

It has been brought to our attention that a nursery in our region has mistakenly supplied Early Black wattle seedlings over the last three years to a LandCare group and to the North Central Catchment Management Authority's 'Living Landscapes' project. The error was not noticed, and now, many of these weedy wattles from NSW are maturing and setting seed and may need to be removed from revegetation sites. This has created a lot of extra work for the project officer and LandCare volunteers, so we want to ensure that is does not happen again.

The problem has been traced back to misidentification of Early Black wattle (*Acacia decurrens*), which is a weed in bushland, having 'escaped' from garden plantings over the decades. The seed collectors mistook it for Late Black Wattle or Silver Wattle, which have very similar looking seed pods and seed.
Unfortunately, neither the nursery or the many recipients of the seedlings noticed that the seedlings produced from this seed had **well-separated leaflets** compared to our local Late Black Wattle (*Acacia mearnsii*) and Silver Wattle (*Acacia dealbata*) which both have leaflets abutting or almost abutting each other. Leon Costerman's book clearly illustrates the differences between these bipinnate (or fern-like) wattles (*N.B. there was no space to include the illustration here*).

Please familiarise yourself with these differences, so that if you are involved in seed collecting, growing seedlings or planting them, you will be confident that you will not be collecting seed from, propagating or planting weeds! Perhaps you could have a close look at your revegetation sites and check if any Early Black Wattle have snuck in by mistake.

Two other distinguishing features of Early Black wattle are its early flowering time (July-September), and the branches are strongly angular in cross-section and have ridges down the stems. However, as Black Wattle also has ribbed stems (to a lesser degree), it's better to go by how far apart the leaflets (or pinnules) are spaced. Early Black Wattle has leaflets **well-spaced**, while in Late Black Wattle they are usually touching, and in Silver Wattle, they are only just separated.

If your LandCare group has a newsletter, please consider reproducing the illustration page (*available form the editor*). The more people who can identify Early Black Wattle, the better. If there are a lot of early Black wattle in the bushland near you, you may consider having a working bee as a group to remove them, with permission from the land owner/manager, of course.

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, February 8 7.30pm
Members usually bring their holiday slides for the first meeting of the year. You are welcome to bring yours along.
(Note, there was no January meeting)

Excursions
We have a brand new excursion program for 2006, starting with a day trip to Mt Buffalo. Please see page 3 for the entire program and details of the upcoming excursions.

Saturday, February 11 Mt Buffalo
for alpine/subalpine vegetation (fire recovery), birds, short walk on tracks, historic chalet, waterfall. The program is flexible for those who want to take it a bit more easy.
Cost 15.00 (for the bus)
Leave at 7.00am from clubrooms at Golden square and return at 8.00pm.

Please see page 3 for what to bring.
Contact: Richard Goonan 0423418815

Fauna Group
This group meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm.

Wednesday, February 22 7.30pm
Topic: Possums

Fauna Excursions
Every Friday morning starting at around 9 to 9:30, the Fauna Group inspects nest boxes in the Spring Gully area. The excursions are led by Maurie Lewis, 16 Vains St. Golden Square. Phone 0407 427 179 or 5442 1813. Phone Maurie to confirm exact departure times and location. If you don't phone but go directly to Maurie's house and find nobody at the house between 9 and 9:30 then the excursion is not on.

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.
W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals.It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Natural Resources and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need.
Phone: 0419 356433.

Bendigo Field Naturalists on the web
Any comments about the site are most welcome.
http://communitysites.impulse.net.au/bendigofieldnaturalists/fnats.html

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New Edition of Box Ironbark CD
Just to let you know that the new edition of 'Plants and Animals of the Box-Ironbark Area of Central Victoria' is available at the usual price of $ 50.-

...and **Wildlife of the Box Ironbark Country by Chris Tzaros** is also still available at $ 30.-.

Please contact Bill Holsworth if you are interested in purchasing one of these.